

June 1978

DCI CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

CUBANS IN ANGOLA

I. Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin with a few remarks about the nature and scale of the Cuban involvement in Angola. It is, after all, this massive presence that enables the Cubans to support rebel groups such as the ex-Katangans who have invaded Zaire twice in the last 14 months.

II. The Cubans are playing a critical military role in countering the continuing opposition to the Neto regime. They also provide technical expertise that is vital to the Angolan government and economy.

A. We estimate that there are 19,000 to 20,000 Cuban soldiers and about 5,000 civilian advisers in Angola. Another 5,000 advisers--mostly teachers and construction workers--

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are expected by the end of this year. Recent reporting suggests that the number of Cuban soldiers in Angola may also be increased shortly.

III. In the civilian sector, Cuban advisers fill much of the vacuum created by the departure of the managerial and technical personnel of the colonial era.

A. They are developing a national education system, running the public health service, assisting in the coffee and sugar harvests, and reconstructing roads and bridges destroyed during the civil war. Along with about 1,000 Soviet advisers, they are virtually running some government ministries including the Ministries of Construction and Housing, Defense, Education, Health, Finance, Transport, and Foreign Trade.

IV. The Neto regime would probably fall if it were not for the Cuban military presence.

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A. The Cubans provide critical training, air, artillery, and logistic~~al~~ support to the Angolan military. Although the Cubans usually operate alongside the Angolans in fighting the insurgents, they also mount independent--and on occasion fairly substantial--operations against the guerrillas.

B. We believe that more than 1,000 Cubans have been killed in Angola since the civil war. Since last fall, Cuban casualties have increased markedly because of an intensification in the fighting and because Cuban soldiers have become the insurgents' highest priority target.

V. In addition, the substantial Cuban presence has become a major source of friction with the Angolan people.

A. Difficulties involving civilian advisers have been resolved fairly easily when top political leaders are called in, but antipathy toward the Cubans in the military is likely to become an increasingly serious

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problem. Morale is low, some Cuban units have refused combat assignments, and there have been occasional reports that fights between Cuban and Angolan soldiers have resulted in casualties.

B. Neto probably would like to reduce the Cuban presence somewhat. Given the immensity and immediacy of his problems, however, he has little choice but to seek more foreign troops and advisers.

VI. In addition to their other activities in Angola, the Cubans provide training for ZAPU, SWAPO, and Katangan guerrillas based in southern and eastern Angola. We believe there are about 2,000 ZAPU, 4,000 SWAPO, and 5,000 Katangan guerrillas in Angola.

CUBAN AND SOVIET SUPPORT FOR KATANGAN INSURGENTS

I. Mr. Chairman, for the remainder of this briefing, I would like to outline for you the evidence that has led us to the conclude:

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- A. That the Cubans have been involved in training and advising the Katangans since 1975.
- B. That the Soviets and Cubans have supplied the Katangans with weapons and equipment.
 - That the Cuban and Soviet involvement was going strong right up until May 13 when the most recent attack on Katanga occurred.
 - That the Cubans, at least, ^{had} ~~at~~ foreknowledge of that attack.

II. Let me take, first, the Cuban denials of involvement.

- A. Most of these points have been made in private by Cuban officials and by the Cuban Vice President at the UN earlier this week. They were, however, made most fully by Fidel Castro to the US Interests Section in Havana on 17 May. He said:

- 1. There are no Cubans with the Katangan forces in Shaba.
- 2. Cuba has not participated either directly or indirectly in the Shaba affair.

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3. Cuba has provided no weapons or other material to the Katangan forces.
4. Cuba has not trained the Katangan forces.
5. Cuba has not had any contact with the Katangans for at least two years.

B. Our evidence shows that all of these assertions are false except the first one. We have not been able to confirm reports that Cuban personnel actually entered Zaire and participated in the fighting.

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III. Virtually all of the evidence we have on Cuban and Soviet involvement with the Katangans comes from clandestine reporting. The reporting is particularly convincing because it represents a wide variety of sources--many of them extremely sensitive--and because it is consistent. In reaching our conclusions, we have discounted all reports from Zairian sources, given the high probability of bias.

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IV. Let me detail the evidence on the Cuban role
with the Katangans.

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B. [redacted] was told during extensive
conversations with two Katangan prisoners
that two Cuban and six Angolan advisers
accompanied the rebels when they started
moving out of Angola in early May. The
prisoners added that Katangan "political
commissars," who had been trained in
Angola by Cubans and East Germans, were
assigned to each group of 50 rebels.

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C. [redacted] reports a Cuban
official stating in early May that Cuban,
Soviet, and East German personnel were
training Katangan rebels in Angola.

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D. In October 1977, [REDACTED]

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learned from Angolan military officers that 1,500 Katangan recruits in Angola had just completed their training and were under the control of Cuban and East German instructors.

E. In August 1977, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] had said that the Cubans were training some 2,000 Katangans in northeastern Angola.

F. [REDACTED] have reported that Soviet and East German advisers have been training Katangan guerrillas for one year and possibly longer. Most of this instruction reportedly takes place in northeastern Angola where large Cuban and Angolan military camps are also located.

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V. Another body of evidence strongly supports the case that the Cubans were involved with the Katangans prior to the first Shaba invasion in March 1977. [REDACTED]

A. For example, [REDACTED]

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[redacted] have reported that the Angolan army and its Cuban military advisers helped train the insurgents and coordinated closely in the planning of the invasion.

B. We also know that Castro told [redacted] at a meeting in Moscow in April 1977 that Cuba was helping the Katangan nationalists because once Katanga fell, Zaire would fall like a house of cards.

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VI. It is clear that the Cubans knew about the most recent invasion before it occurred.

A. Two days before the attack a Cuban official commented [redacted] that an increase in military action by the Katangan rebels might be anticipated in the near future.

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B. Castro himself told the Chief of the US Interests Section in Havana on 17 May that Cuba had received reports that the Katangans were preparing for another incursion.

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C. The question of the extent to which the Cubans or others have control over Katangan activities is more difficult. The Katangans probably have some freedom of action on tactics, local objectives, and timing of specific operations. Nevertheless, we believe that the support provided the insurgents by Cuba, Angola, and the Soviet Union gives these countries veto power over any major Katangan operations.

VII. Based on a limited number of reports--but from

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[redacted] -we believe the Katangans have received arms and equipment from the Soviet Union, Cuba, and possibly other Communist countries.

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A. [redacted] reported that

two "Cuban or Soviet" ships unloaded weapons--mostly small arms and ammunition--in Luanda harbor in early October 1977, and that these were destined for the sole use of the Katangans. We know that several Cuban and Soviet ships were anchored in Luanda harbor at about that time.

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VIII. As I noted earlier, we cannot confirm the actual presence of Cubans in Zaire during the fighting.

A. We do not believe Havana would have wanted to be involved in actual combat in Zaire.

The risk of Cubans being captured or killed--and thus providing concrete proof of Cuban involvement--would simply be too high.

B. We cannot rule out the possibility, however, that a few Cubans did accompany the Katangan invaders into Zaire.

1. The most credible report of this to date comes from a [redacted] citizen trapped in Kolwezi at the time of the invasion. He claims that he was spotted only after conversing in Spanish with some Cubans.

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C. Cuban advisors probably did at least accompany the rebels to the border.

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1.

[redacted]
[redacted] before the invasion

that Cuban personnel were organizing a large number of Katangan troops and that Cuban advisers were moving with the troops toward the Zambian border.

2. This report is corroborated by the statements of two Katangan prisoners to [redacted] which I mentioned earlier. The Katangans said that Cuban and Angolan advisers were with them when they started to move in early May.

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Cuban Sensitivity About Shaba

US accusations that Cuba has been involved with the FNLC have provoked a strong and emotional reaction from the Castro regime for at least two reasons.

--First, if a convincing case is made that Havana backed the FNLC, Havana's credibility as a responsible actor on the African continent would be seriously undermined. Havana has repeatedly justified its interventions in Angola and Ethiopia by arguing that it was coming to the defense of established governments. In the case of Zaire, however, the Castro regime will be open to the charge that it abetted attempts to subvert a legitimate black African government. The Cubans have defended their intervention in Ethiopia on the grounds that they were helping the Mengistu government maintain its territorial integrity. In Zaire, however, the Cubans will be shown to have supported efforts to dismember an African state.

--Secondly, Cuba has been concerned that outside powers aligned with Mobutu might use evidence of Cuban involvement with the FNLC as a justification for a strike into Angola. Havana's concern on this point probably was considerably heightened by the South African raid into Angolan territory on May 4 as well as the rapid Western response to the conflict in Zaire.

Reasons for Castro's Personal Involvement

- Fear that charges of Cuban involvement (if left unchallenged) would provide Western forces with excuse for retaliation against Angola.
- Corollary concern that rapid escalation of the conflict would cause it to spill over into Angola and lead to involvement of Cuban forces there.
- Concern that international acceptance of allegations ^(unlike the cases of Angola and Ethiopia) of Cuban involvement ^A would leave Havana open to charges of dismembering an African state. [~~This has not been possible in the cases of Angola or Ethiopia.~~
- Castro realizes that concrete proof of Cuban involvement will be difficult to obtain as long as Cuban personnel do not accompany the Katangans across the border.